

## A Mirror but Wrong by orphan\_account

**Category:** Stranger Things (TV 2016)

**Genre:** Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence, Anger, Anger Management, Angst, Billy Hargrove Being an Asshole, Billy Hargrove Is an Asshole, Billy tries to be a better brother, Billy tries to be a better person, Billy tries to control his anger, Canon-Typical Violence, Child Abuse, Child Neglect, Consensual Underage Sex, Cuddling & Snuggling, Depression, Domestic Violence, Emotional Hurt/Comfort, Emotional/Psychological Abuse, F/M, Falling In Love, Fluff and Angst, Gen, Homophobia, Homophobic Language, Hurt/Comfort, Implied Sexual Content, Implied/Referenced Child Abuse, Implied/Referenced Drug Use, Implied/Referenced Homophobia, Implied/Referenced Underage Sex, Internalized Homophobia, M/M, Platonic Cuddling, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder - PTSD, Racism, Supernatural Elements, Survival, Swearing, The Upside Down, Trust Issues, Underage Drinking, Underage Smoking, Violence, but he tries

**Language:** English

**Characters:** Billy Hargrove, Dustin Henderson, Eleven (Stranger Things), Jonathan Byers, Lucas Sinclair, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Mike Wheeler, Nancy Wheeler, Steve Harrington

**Relationships:** Billy Hargrove & Steve Harrington, Billy Hargrove/Steve Harrington, Eleven & Mike Wheeler, Eleven/Mike Wheeler, Jonathan Byers/Nancy Wheeler

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**Warnings:** Graphic Depictions Of Violence, Underage

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**Summary:**

The Gate closed and shut the The Mind Flayer, and everything with it, in The Upside Down; and when the tunnels collapsed back into the Gate, they took Steve Harrington and Billy Hargrove with them. On the wrong side of a locked door, can they survive long enough for

their rescue to come?

: Semi-Established Relationship. All will be explained. Tags are important, some may be added. Rating is a solid M :

## **A Mirror but Wrong**

### **Author's Note:**

No Beta.

There is a bigger time gap between events; specifically the party where Nancy and Steve break up, and Will's possession.

Please let me know if there is any mistakes and anything I can improve on.

Comments and Kudos are appreciated!

Love, xZ

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### ***The Upside Down***

*Date: November 20th, 1983*

*Subject(s) : Steven Daniel Harrington (17), William Neil Hargrove (17)*

*Time In: 6 hrs (Day 1)*

When you live, as you grow up, you never really seem to realize how *loud* everything is. There is *constant* background noise -voices, cars, electricity, animals, wildlife- an uninterrupted, endless, *constant* chaotic symphony of everyday existence. There is no quiet. No silence. No stillness. Because that, that is *life*. Life, which is loud and messy and noisy and filled to the brim with movement and sound.

Steve Harrington, well, he had spent much of his life in a large empty, house, alone - and *honestly* it had been *months* since he had last seen either of his parents. Steve thought he knew silence, he had thought he was comfortable with silence; he had even thought silence was *peaceful*.

What he didn't know, however, was that it was never *truly* silent.

The ticking of a clock. The creaking of a house. The chirp of a bird, alive and loud, outside his bedroom window.

There was *always* noise.

In the Upside Down, there was no noise.

No movement.

No symphony.

Only silence.

Still. Unmoving. *Dead*.

*And it was not peaceful.*

*It was a predator.*

*Waiting. Watching.*

'Like a mirror, but *wrong*,' ' Nancy had said.

It was *so, so wrong*.

Steve didn't know how long he and Billy had been stuck here; since the tunnels had collapsed down on them with a bright flash of light, with an overwhelmingly violent shudder and a loud *crack* that had left his ears ringing and his brain scrambled. It could have been *years ago* at this point, and neither he, nor Billy, would have any idea.

Time moves differently here, in *this* world.

*This 'version' of the world.*

At first, they had tried to count the hours -but when it was dark, it was also light, some areas more than others- and the clocks on all the walls were frozen at the exact time of 9:36 pm; so they gave up on that very, very quickly. The first moments after the tunnels were the worst, even for Steve, who was unconscious; because when he woke up, he was in a *wrong* version of the Beyer's back shed, adjusting to the fact that his entire *world* was *different* - with the kid's screams still in his ears and his bat on his left.

And then there was Billy, sat *very still* next to him -*protecting, watching*- with a large hunting knife in his trembling, gore covered hands; strangely still, *disconnected* - with his broad chest splattered in shades of black and red blood. Steve still didn't know what exactly had happened, and what had caused Billy to be so terrifyingly *cold* that first day. Steve *still* didn't *know* how Billy had got him through the woods, to safety. *How he saved his life.*

He doubted he ever would.

The brunette, freshly conscious and desperate for any kind of distraction, had done the best he could with bandaging the long, jagged, claw marks on the other teens torso - and had found himself just ... *talking*. No prompt, not even a glance in his direction and suddenly he explained *everything*. *Because, what the hell, right? What was the point in hiding anything from the other boy?* It was right in front of him, he was *in it, it was real*. And it was *awful*. A twisted world that mimicked their own, some kind of creeping, *Eldritch horror*. It was like an apocalypse of poison and *darkness* - a wasteland of despair and infection, where there was not light, no happiness.

Steve had thought of everything, *everything*, -Will, Barbara, Eleven, Hawkins Lab and *back* to Will- and he had spilled his guts in a most likely completely unintelligible manor. He had thought it would be difficult, talking to Billy that way, that it would be interrupted and riddled with questions and demands and that *famous Billy Hargrove* anger. Steve had expected to be *punched* or *threatened* -*at the very least*- but Billy had just listened. Watched him with silent, perceptive, blue eyes and sat *very still*.

*Silent and still, like everything else here.*

Steve tried not to be upset about it, about the silent treatment, it wasn't like they were close *-not anymore-*, and Steve had made sure that *whatever* had happened between them, well it wasn't happening again - *over, done, finished*. And he was more than sure the other boy wouldn't forgive him for getting him trapped here, putting him in this situation; among the other, more personal, things that had happened between them.

*-Memories of taunts, and smirks, and a spark of fire behind blue eyes; Calloused hands, teeth and lips-*

So, in short, Steve had expected that explosive, animated fire and got only cold, ice cold. *And it scared him, because it was wrong. Like everything else here.*

He supposed that was what he deserved; he *had* roped Billy into this after all. *Had* used that typically violent but extraordinarily overprotective emotion Billy felt toward Max, and turned it against him with a few short words. A quick explanation of *monsters* and *danger* -with an up close look at a refrigerated Demodog- he had practically given Billy an umbrella and told him to survive a hurricane.

*Metaphorically of course. More like gave him a hunting knife and put him in the unstable, underground tunnels that were a physical representation of a Mind Flayer - oh, and some Demodogs. Can't forget those.*

The next morning, having hardly slept but knowing they had stayed in one place too long, they walked up to town; raided the market - *canned food, knives, masks, clothes-* and tried to survive, tried to wait

it out. Steve knew that his friends *-his kids-* wouldn't just *leave them. Not here.*

A rescue was coming, they just had to wait it out.

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## ***The Upside Down***

*Date: Unknown*

*Subject(s) : Steven Daniel Harrington (17), William Neil Hargrove (17)*

*Time In: 96 hrs (Day 4)*

It was getting darker - the skies blackening and Steve had almost expected to see a moon - out of habit, if anything.

There was nothing.

Misty grey clouds floated high in the sky, each singularly lit with an odd, unnatural glow; clashing against a void of black that went on forever. He and Billy were on Main Street, sticking to the center of the road and delicately stepping around the decomposing cars and dilapidated sections of asphalt. The only sounds being their footsteps, soles of their shoes scraping along the hard ground and and their harsh, heavy breathing as they simultaneously slowed to a walk. Steve's baseball bat was coated in the remains of some creature that had tried to jump them - the long nails holding chunks what appeared to be putrid flesh and his shirt coated in a long flow of different blood, including his own.

The back of his left forearm sloppily bandaged with ripped parts of a random shirt - stinging to high heaven and aching like a bitch.

And he was dizzy.

That must be the blood loss.

Maybe hunger.

Probably both.

"What the *fuck* Harrington!" Oh, here we go. Finally, he speaks. More than just a hum of acknowledgment or a grunt of physical exertion and Steve wasn't sure whether to be relieved, or pissed off. Honestly, he was just kind of glad Billy wasn't giving him the silent treatment anymore; he was starting to think he *actually* might hate his guts.

Maybe it had been shock. *Maybe he had just been trying to process everything.*

"It was an *accident* Hargrove, calm your shit." The words came out through slow heavy breaths that fogged in the air in front of him - sweat drying on his skin and rapidly cooling his temperature in an unpleasant way; the blood and sludge coating his clothing sticking unpleasantly to his body.

They looked like they had survived hell.

*Too fucking bad they were still in it.*

"Don't tell me to fucking *calm down*! I'm not gonna *die* because your dumb ass can't fucking sneak past a-a dema- *whatthefuckever!*" Billy practically roared from a pace behind him, his rasped voice echoing down the - *twistedwrong*- street where they marched in hope of safety. "You put *my ass* on the line!"

"Demogorg-"

"Oh sorry I can't remember your nerdy *bullshit*, I'll be sure to get it right *next time*." The blondes tone was *beyond* mocking - getting louder by the second and full of anger. If he wasn't careful he was going to give them away to whatever was lurking nearby -*because there was always something*- and get them *both* torn apart and *eaten*.

Billy Hargrove was *clearly* too selfish to realize this.

"Fuck off asshole, it wasn't my fault." Steve mumbles, keeping his



voice low and eyes watchful because if he saw *anything* - a rustle, something shift - he was making a break for it, and Billy can just catch the fuck up.

“No?” The blonde storms forward in angered, quick movements - grabs him on the arm and spins him around in an abrupt and violent motion that jostles his body, painfully.

It like night and day - they're bickering at each other, with Steve's back turned to the other boy, and then they're just a breath apart, only separated by the thin handkerchiefs covering the lower halves of their faces and it's like they're unable to do anything but stare at each other like idiots. For a moment they're suspended, frozen, somewhere else, somewhere *away* and *then* - and a bright, ice, blue bores down on him and e's locked in, and he can't get away. *He doesn't want to.* And there, suspended, for just a moment, *a blip*, he sees Billy. *The real Billy. The one he knows, behind the mask.* And it's like Christmas morning, like seeing the sun, and it fills him with something indescribable because William Hargrove is *worried* about him. *And he can see it. He can see him.*

“I’m not the one that sliced open my own fucking arm and practically called it right to us!”

And then it's gone, and he's left flailing and scrambling for purchase as he crashes back down; and Billy is worried and he can't express it - *doesn't know how, was never taught*- so he's just so *angry*.

“It. Was. An. Accident.” It was, really; it’s not like he would purposefully gouge the back of his arm open.

Steve wasn't an idiot, he wasn't suicidal, he wanted to survive - he just hadn't see the sharp edge of the metal shelving, and when he went to turn away it had *caught* and *pulled*. *Ripped*.

“I don’t give a *fuck*! I’m not responsible for your stupid fuck ups!” Billy's even closer to him now, inching forward with every venom filled syllable, and Steve had forgot what this looked like up close - that wild, uncontrollable, anger.

Their chests were touching, brushing together and heaving, not

entirely from their previous exertion - and the grip on his shoulder is squeezing tighter, bruising and painful.

Steve is all for this new *talking* and finally *expressing emotion* thing but he was not into this *hurting* thing.

“You’re the one calling everything to us with your temper tantrum!” This was *ridiculous*.

A childish argument because they had almost *died* and they were *stuck here* and people were not *equipped to deal with this*. Tension was running high - Billy hadn't spoken in what seemed like years to him and Steve had just been trying to go with it, *wait it out*, but god, it was so hard. *How had Will lasted a week in here?*

*Had it been that long? Longer?*

“Right because you were so *damn helpful*. Hawkins High's precious King Steve can't lift a finger-” Really. *Really? Fuckin' really?*

It's not like Steve has been doing this *longer* or anything. It's not like Steve had been here this entire time, beside Billy *-fighting, surviving-* not that he was proud of it, no, but he handled himself just fine before Billy ever even *moved* to Hawkins *thankyouverymuch*.

“Fuck off Billy! You’re such a dick!” He's hurt, hides it, buries it away, and shoves at the broader chest in front of him, disregarding the still healing scratches along his torso - not missing the wince of pain at the action.

And Billy rebounds, rapidly, quicker than he expected and powering forward, grabbing Steve by the collar of his tattered shirt and shoving him against the side of a nearby dilapidated car. *Because Billy Hargrove is violent, and this is what he does*. All the breath leaves him in a *whoosh* and all the recent bruises littering his body throb with the impact, and a deep ache ignites in all the new ones as they layered over some he didn't even *know* he had. The jagged metal *-ripped and torn and filled with knotted purple and black vines-* and it digs deep into his back and he grimaces with a painful hiss as Billy presses hard against him.

"Boo hoo, King Steve can't handle a little truth." Billy taunts, scowling and so close to him he can feel the breath coming from behind his black and red handkerchief, intermingling with his own in a way that was not all unfamiliar, a light fogging in the air so close it brushed over his face.

Familiar azure eyes are alight -*worrystressexhaustion*- and staring deep into his own.

Steve knows what this is - this *front* of anger and insult because he can still see the panic, the absolute *terror*, that had split Billy's icy facade as Steve's arm split open with a cry of pain - a flood of red from the wound as he clutched his arm close to his chest and tried to stifle a scream behind gritted teeth. The horror he saw in those cerulean eyes as the Demogorgon spun around in an abnormal display of agility; *screeching* as it smelt his blood - *found its prey*. Billy had reacted quicker, grabbing him and tossing him effortlessly out of the way as the monster barreled toward them; grabbing Steve's bat from the ground where he had dropped it, and *swinging*-

"Get off me," There's no conviction in the way he said it, no real anger - it faded away to irritation because this was *ridiculous*. This was childish and he was just encouraging it.

"Harrington-"

"I'm okay, Billy."

*Fuck. Shit.*

*Was that too much? He didn't mean to say it, but god, he just didn't want to argue. Billy hadn't spoken in days and their first conversation wasn't even a conversation. And it was stupid to pretend that he was angry, when he wasn't. It was stupid to feed Billy's anger, when it wasn't even based off anger. The last thing he wanted was Billy actually getting riled up enough to potentially leave him alone here in this fucked up world.*

*Goddammit he needed him.*

And Billy pauses, mouth snapping shut with a *click* - his body rigid and taut, and his hand tightening around the collar of Steve's shirt as

he presses even closer to him and his *eyes -eyes so bright and so like the sky, the real sky-* not the endless void it was now; and then they *melted* and flowed like *water*. It was almost like something had just poured over the raging fire and extinguished it in one finite swoop. *'You're fire, I'm water, it just doesn't work-'* Steve had told him once, what seemed like months ago, and he wondered if either of them realized just how *true* that was.

*Thank you Nancy, and all your spiritual crap.*

And he watched as Billy wavered, tilting on the precipice of something familiar and searching Steve's hazel for answers, cyan orbs flickering down his body just once, before coming back. Steve knew what Billy was seeing *-bruises, blood, rips and tears. Skin too pale and eyes bloodshot-* he just *knew* that he didn't believe him. Knew that Billy thought Steve was close to collapse, or mental break and he was just *worried*.

*He was just worried.*

The air around them was electric with something he couldn't - *wouldn't-* name, and filled with something powerful. And it was just so quiet, like the world was waiting.

And then Billy scoffed, roughly pushing against Steve's chest *-he hadn't realized they were leaning forward-* and spinning away in one singular, fluid movement; rolling his shoulders and seeming to shake the tension off with an ease Steve envied. And not waiting for him to catch up, he resumed their previous pace,

*"As if I care."*

And Steve just sighs, because that was just so *Billy Hargrove*, and he picked up his beloved bat *-when had that fallen out of his hand?-* and following at a significantly slower pace.

*A rescue was coming. They just had to survive each other until then.*

## ***The Upside Down***

*Date: Unknown*

*Subject(s) : Steven Daniel Harrington (17), William Neil Hargrove (17)*

*Time In: 216 hrs (Day 9)*

It started after the party. *That party*. Billy Hargrove was -is- an asshole; with too loud of a mouth, too much anger and a fucked up superiority complex. Steve Harrington was heartbroken, slightly tipsy and very pissed off. It's not as if Billy took advantage of him - *no, no, no way*. Even with all his lovely *traits*, he didn't think, *he knew*, Billy was never ever *ever* the type to do something like *that*. Plus, that's not even when *it* started - it just led into that. Eventually. Steve had just ditched a very drunk, very ' *bullshitty*' Nancy Wheeler and had found himself walking toward the park on Fern Ave, trying not to cry with the conversation he had just had with his -*girlfriend?* *That shouldn't be a question*- repeating in his head *over and over* like a broken record.

*'Bullshit. It's all bullshit.'*

*'Like we're in love.'*

*'You don't love me?'*

*'It's bullshit.'*

It was dark and cold and Steve Harrington of *all people* knew not to wander around Hawkins Indiana at night - not with the fresh memories of a flower faced mammoth lunging at him with - *hungryevilkillit*- playing over and over again in his nightmares every night and never letting him sleep, jumping out at him behind blind corners and in the rustling of leaves or a sudden loud noise. It had been almost exactly a year since he had gotten any semblance of a full night's sleep.

The half-moon was high in the sky, spreading a milky white glow over the street with the stars glowing bright against the navy blackness of the sky, and Steve could see his breath as walked with his hands stuffed deep in his pockets and his head down, chin against chest. His nose was running, eyes watering and his heart felt like it was beating itself into a pulp against his chest.

*Heartbreak* - Steve guessed.

And when he got to the park, guess who was there? Car parked in the middle of the open field, shining under the moonlight, acting like he owned the place and that it wasn't illegal as shit to park on state property like that -*or that he hadn't just been at Tommy's party, just like Steve and he probably knew exactly what had happened-*

"Th' fuck you want?" Billy - *Motherfucking* - Hargrove.

Steve had just sighed, not in the mood, and turned away -*just go home-* from the obviously drunk figure laying on the hood of his Camaro -*he had to admit, it was a nice car-* causally staring at the stars and the sky; a joint in his mouth and Fleetwood Mac - *surprisingly* - playing softly from the speakers. It was embarrassing that Steve was so distracted, so out of it, he couldn't even hear the music playing from the car until he was only feet from it. It was incredibly concerning that he was *this* off, that he wasn't aware of his surroundings, knowing what was out there and the *possibilities* if he was caught off guard.

"Wan' a hit?"

*Just go home. Go home Steve.*

But he didn't, and then they were both on the hood of Billy Hargrove's car, staring at the stars, reeking of alcohol and marijuana with no need to talk - to break the somehow silent truce that had sprung up between them. In an odd turn events so *strange*, that became a ... dare he say, *regular thing*. Not always with alcohol, and definitely not always with marijuana - *Steve wasn't a huge fan* - and not when Billy was being too much of an ass at school that day and Steve couldn't stand him; or the couple times Steve would show up, and Billy wouldn't be there. It was a strange ritual, unnecessary and illegal, yet they kept it up.

And when he ended up alone, Steve would just lay in the grass anyway and forget for a while, escape. There was no particular signal, no sign they gave to each other during the day, no promise, no pact. It just happened, and kept happening. They didn't talk either, not in school; Billy was still a dick to everything with a pulse who even glanced his way, and Steve went through his days painfully avoiding an overly apologetic Nancy Wheeler. There was no holding back on the basketball court that indicated anything was different.

But in the park, they had peace. They had balance. It was almost therapeutic. Meditation, almost. *Friendship, almost.*

Until-

"Harrington?" Billy was standing at his feet, arms crossed over his chest, full moon shining on his back and illuminating his silhouette - with cigarette in his hand and very confused as to why Steve was there, alone, in the dark, in the grass.

Steve didn't answer -*didn't feel like it*- just pat the ground next to him in an inviting gesture for the other teen to join him - which he did, with a huff, smelling of nicotine and sweat; Close enough to where their shoulders brushed, and the rough texture of Billy's leather jacket brushed against Steve's cotton hoodie. Steve didn't ask where his car was, *it wasn't his business*, and instead he reached over and plucked out one of the beers from the six pack he had brought with him, handing it over; taking a deep drink of his while the one next to him opened with a metallic, *click*.

Steve didn't ask about the dark, swollen, bruising on the left side of

Billy's face; the split lip, the swollen jaw. *It wasn't his business.*

Billy didn't ask about the tear tracks on Steve's face, or the fact that he had stormed out of school during lunch that day and didn't come back. *It wasn't his business.*

Hours went by, and Steve could feel the other boy watching him, eyes burning into the sides of his face as he took deep gulps of some of the last of the beer. They had drank through the six pack, the moon slowly orbiting the sky, getting later and later in only cricket-filled silence.

And finally, Steve turned toward him - and they were so close; Breath intermingling, eyes locked, body heat and bright, alert, eyes.

Lips and tongue and the taste of smoke and blood and sweat - heavy breathing, and then Steve was on his lap like a fucking woman, and his shirt was coming off and so was Billy's, and *what was he doing.*

*skinonskin-pleasure-morepleasebilly*

Later on, Steve tried not to think about that first kiss, that first time - *not sex, not yet, but close-* not after what had happened. The arguments, the pain, the regret, it was all in the past; something that lasted barely two weeks - *not counting their companionship in the park beforehand.* They were short lived and rightfully so. It would've never worked between them. Steve would like to say that *Billy* was the one to screw up, the one who let his anger and *emotions* and *fear* get in the way of that-that *thing* between them; that strange oddity that was *so wrong, unnatural.*

*He wanted to say Billy had ended it ... but that wasn't true.*

And *now, now*, there they sat, weeks later, shoulders touching and breath rapid with fear as they hid in a warped, dark, *rotting*, version of, ironically, the Wheeler's bathroom floor, and Steve he remembered *it all* - the good and the bad - because his heart felt like it was going to burst out of his chest and his muscles were moving in



violent spasms, stinging with exhaustion with his legs pulsing as they stretched out in front of him; because *ohmygodtheyalmostdied*

*"What the fuck was that thing?"* Billy whispered, his breathing more frantic than he had ever heard it and strained, shaking and wheezing against his throat as he slumped against the far wall next to Steve - *shoulders brushing, familiar-* his broad chest heaving and blood running from a gash on his temple. There was an ax loosely gripped in the palm of his right hand, covered in gore and gunk and he wasn't sure *what*.

The knife was long gone, buried in the back of something, somewhere.

*How long ago was that?*

*"I don't know."* Steve's voice was shot to hell, barely there, dehydrated and cracking against his frantic gasping, and the bruises and cuts on his back - bleeding and stinging - from being tossed to the ground like a goddamn rag-doll by some - some *thing* - *something* he had never even *seen* before.

Unnaturally long, disfigured arms and legs and crawling on all fours with a strangely, skeletal body; oozing pitch black skin, stretched taut over it's structure *-like their wasn't enough of it-* ripping and tearing in prominent places where the it's bones jutted out too severely, bone sticking straight out. A humanoid head shape opened up, *peeled back*, revealing teeth; *so many* rows of *teeth* and a monstrous, ringing that vibrated the ground like the tremor of an earthquake.

*WrongSoWrong*

Of course, he had known that there was other monsters in the Upside Down, other than the Demogorgon and the dogs and the Mind Flayer but *that ... that was terrifying. That was evil and huge, towering over them and crawling and the sounds and theynearlydied. They could have died.*

*Is he even alive? Is his heart beating?*

*Is this a dream? Is this real?*

Steve thought of that night, that *first* night where Billy had been so open and gentle and where that *Princess* nickname had come from - from something sexual and *as much as he hated to admit it* made him blush and feel all *pleased* inside.

Steve thought of how alive he had felt. How alive Billy made him feel.

Steve thought of how dead he felt now. *How alive Billy made him feel.*

And maybe he shouldn't have, maybe it was wrong of him to *use* Billy to feel *something* - maybe it was wrong of him to go back on *his decision* to end their *relationship*; maybe Steve is more fucked up as a person than even *he knows*. *And maybe he really shouldn't have complicated things again* - but as Billy reached up to lower his face covering, he didn't even hesitate. Didn't even stop to think how it could affect either of them in the long run; just yanked his own down and launched himself across Billy's lap in a familiar motion and grabbing his companion's shocked face - and pressed their lips together so hard their teeth clicked and it *hurt* but he could *feel it*. *Maybe it was wrong of him to want the only thing that made him feel alive in months - even after he had stopped it. Even if the whole world thought it was gross and disgusting.*

*Maybe Steve Harrington was selfish.*

Billy breathed in, sharp and surprised and a familiar growl coming out of his throat as bloody arms encircled him - one grabbing at the side of his neck and the other around his back and *groping* as Steve writhed and went up onto his knees, leaning over the bigger form he straddled, hands tugging at Billy's curly blonde mullet and eagerly *arched* into Billy's form; a strangled whimper leaving his throat as the blonde leaned into him, pulled him tighter, gripped him harder.

Relished in the feeling, heart racing, but not in fear, not this time.

He wondered if, when they were rescued, the people of Hawkins, his

friends, his family - would they recognize him anymore?

\*\*

## ***The Upside Down***

*Date: Unknown*

*Subject(s) : Steven Daniel Harrington (17), William Neil Hargrove (17)*

*Time In: 432 hrs (Day 18)*

*Cold. God help him, it was so cold. Teeth chattering, bone chilling, cannot breathe cold.*

Steve was bundled into layers and layers of jackets and blankets but he still could not seem to produce an ounce of body heat, and he didn't know why, didn't understand what was going on. It was like he was hit by a *truck*. One second he's trying to find bedding and blankets to settle down and get some rest and then *blank, darkness, blackness and he felt like he was dying*. Steve couldn't think, couldn't move as his body shook out of his control, and he felt like stone, like there was solid ice beneath his skin. *What was happening to him?* It had been getting colder as the time passed, sky getting darker and darker and the monsters seeming to become *sparse and weak*; And it didn't take them long to realize that, if creatures born and bred in this hellhole were in hiding what did that mean for them?

Face still covered by the handkerchief, one would've thought that it warmed him, but even as his breath hit it, there was absence of anything but ice; Steve wondered if it was coming from *inside* him. He wondered if his organs were slowly becoming ice, killing him from the inside out. He wondered if he would die, laying there on the wood floor in a world that wasn't his own; if his body would turn to ice, or become food for a scavenger.

*Shuffling above his head, movement, breathing - Billy.* With blurry vision and a sluggish mind, he tried to arch his neck up, tried to turn to see-

“Don’t move Harrington.” Muffled, a little raspy, Billy’s voice was a command, not a suggestion.

The brunette could see his feet, shuffling, moving and clad in the same combat boots he had been wearing for days - but covered in black slime and residue. *How long had he been there? How long has Steve been freezing?* Billy's form looked oddly thick, and it only took him a moment to realize he was enveloped in a large coat, over layers and layers of sweaters; carrying objects back and forth - *backandforth* - over his shoulder. The wooden floor creaked softly beneath his feet, and a hollow, wooden noise followed him wherever he went and he was *loud, too loud*, moving quickly and completely disregarding their need for silence.

*He was gathering wood. Why was he gathering wood?* Steveblinked a few times, tried to focus - *a fireplace.*

“You-you c-ca-can’t B-” *Why wouldn’t his mouth work? He couldn’t force the words through the chattering of his teeth.*

A fire would draw too much attention, the smoke would signal them, the monsters would smell it, they would see it and their small moment of rest, peace, their little safe haven, would be *destroyed* and Steve is aware enough to know that he is in *no shape* to fight - *what was Billy thinking?*

“Shut up.”

*Asshole.*

It would draw them, the monsters, the creatures - lead them right toward their cabin. Their cabin, deep in the woods, secluded and hidden away and stocked to the brim with food and supplies; radio’s and traps, guns, blankets. Despite the dilapidation and *Upside Down-typical* apocalyptic feel, it was pretty untouched; and practically screamed *Hopper* with the old CB Radio and police issued rifle. It was *somewhat safe -for now-* they couldn’t risk that.

“Bill-bill-billy st-st-t-stop,”

Despite his feeble protests, the fire was lit with Billy slowly nursing it to life, crouched down in front of it and feeding it with a patience he wasn't sure the teen had possessed; and with it, Steve could feel the heat almost instantly, protests dying on his chattering teeth and blue lips. Billy's crouched figure was illuminated through the haze in his vision, and he had to stop himself from calling him an *angle*. It was a bad *bad* idea, but he couldn't help but struggle to move closer, inch toward it, desperate for any relief from the ice in his veins.

“I'm coming Princess, hold on.” Steve whimpered, and he felt so *weak* and *pathetic*, but he *needed Billy*.

Once satisfied the fire could feed itself, Billy moved quickly, efficiently, with a purpose - chucking off all his layers and throwing them against a nearby chair - save for the necklace he always wore dangling against his pecs; ripping the jeans off his legs until he was in nothing but boxers and boots with the fire roaring against his outline, flickering against the grey, black mottled walls - *popping, crackling, hissing*.

“Not-not r-r-r-really i-n the-the m-mood Bill-Billy,” It stuttered out pathetically with weak smirk he couldn't hold against his lips, confused as to what exactly Billy was doing - but knowing that *that* would *not* be happening. Fuck no. Not when he felt like death was minutes away and he was turning into an icicle.

*No matter how attractive it was that Billy Hargrove knew how to start and keep a fire going and he was now practically naked in front of him-*

“Shut up, Princess,” Billy mumbled, fondly a wavering smirk on his lips - but there was a strain to his voice, a strange tone Steve couldn't identify. “Tryin' to get you warm, lips are blue.” *Oh, well. That's not good. Right, skin on skin contact meant warmth. First grade survival Harrington, get it together.* Billy sat down on one of the quilts, laid out to provide a barrier from the foreign substances and textures along the ground, and pulling the pile of shivering blankets that was *Steve* over, close to the fire and *warmth*.

And he quickly unraveled Steve's ailing, frozen, form, much to his

desperate protest. Layers of quilts and jackets later, Billy yanked his almost naked and worryingly pale and blue-ish form to his chest, enveloping him in his arms and surrounding them both in blankets, only inches from the crackling fire in front of them. Now, so close, it was easy to feel their starvation without the layers of fabric. Billy had lost a considerable amount of muscle since the last time he had been this bare against his chest, though his arms stayed fit, if only from the constant defense against the monsters hunting them - and with a slight height advantage and muscle tone of his own, Steve had always felt he could *-at the very least-* hold his own against Billy Hargrove.

*Now?* Now he felt like a *waif*, felt so *small* next to him now. *How long had they been stuck here?*

"Can't have you dyin' on me Princess," Was whispered in the shell of his ear - and Steve shivered from the contrasting temperature of his breath.

Strong arms wrapped around him *-so gently, so careful-* and his muscled legs surrounded him, protectively, on either side; Steve tried desperately to calm his frantic breathing, bite down to stop his teeth from chattering, and he tried to *burrow* into the warmth Billy provided because he felt like the sun, like a heater, like Billy was the fire and Steve was trying absorbing the heat as it radiated from his skin and Steve just wished *Billy would share some.*

Steve pressed his ear against the blonde's chest *-to hear his heart, make sure he was real, there, they were alive-* and Billy just held him tighter, understanding, comforting; with his chin against Steve's head of filthy, mop-like hair. Steve was pretty sure the soothing, rocking motion the other boy provided to him was unconscious; though he was less sure of the soft sound of humming in his ear, Billy knowing just how much Steve loved it when he sang; and Steve moved gently up and down with rhythmic motion of Billy's breathing.

The fire was strong, and warm, as was Billy, and then *finally, slowly* in stages - *relief. Warmth.*

Steve's vision was still blurry, still unfocused and a little bit glossed over, and the world, this world - *wrongworldwrong* - tilted, slowly, on its axis - shifting, *warping*, against the flickering of the fire and the

blackness of the shadows. And the cabin sounded *alive*, walls *groaning and creaking* as they moved - and the sounds echoed in his ears and rattled against his brain. Steve was sure he could see *eyes*, blinking open from the spots along the wood and watching them, staring down and *waiting - for weakness, waiting to pounce*. All different colors, green and red and blue, all glowing neon and piercing into his skin with a terrifying intensity.

*What ... What was happening?*

He tried to process, tried to see through the distortion in his vision and watched the way the walls-the walls *were moving and twisting, warping* - what. What is that? Not on the wall, on him. What was on him? What's on his arm?

The cut. The slice from before - *When was that? When did that happen?* The back of his arm, it was *black. Black. It was inky, moving and oozing black as it flopped against his body* - and he couldn't move it.

"M-my arm." *Was that his voice?*

That raspy, hollow, whispering sound that struggled to come out of his throat like he hadn't spoke a word months. "Billy, my a-arm." Pathetic, weak, like a child; he sounded desperate and frantic but he couldn't make himself move no matter how hard he tried and his body was no longer ice but it was lead and he *couldn't move*.

*He can't move.*

Panic - *paniccantbreathe* -frantic whimpers coming from his sore throat and tears welling in his eyes, pouring over and falling down his face in long, fat tracks.

*Oh my god. Oh my god, my arm. Billy. Billy. helpme-thewallstheeyesmyarm*

"Shh. Shh." Billy hushed, lips brushing against the back of his neck and crushing him with the tightness of his grip. "I know. I know Princess, shh. We'll figure it out later, you have to sleep." Steve knew what that strange inflection in his voice was now, knew why he had risked the fire, because-because *ohmygodohmygod* suffocating,

choking - Steve was hyperventilating; he couldn't tear his eyes away from it, his arm was so- *Black and rotten and spotted with red and green and oozing - how did he not notice? How long has it been like that? He's dying. He's dying. He's going to die here with the eyes watching him and waiting for it to happen.*

"Billy. Billy." It's the only word he could produce, the only thing he could force out of his mouth as his body reacted in ways he couldn't control -*Billy had to help him, he had to help - "Billy." Please, he didn't want to die - oh god he felt sick-*

"Shh. Sleep. *Shh, Princess.* It'll be okay." *It won't. It won't because you're worried and you can't be worried, that means it's bad, it's so bad - his arm. His arm.*

*He's going to die.*

As much as he tried to fight it, tried to beg for his counterpart to just *help him* because he was *dying*, the strain of his panic took over, and he was too exhausted, too sick, the relief from the cold was too extreme - and he still couldn't *breathe*. Steve found himself slipping, becoming overwhelmed, body exhausted and weak, vision darkening - on the edges at first and slowly becoming darker - as Billy pleaded for him to *calm*. Eyes closing, breath slowing, collapsing against the warmth of the body against him in one, jerky, motion - frantic whimpers still faint in his throat, and a soothing voice still in humming in his ear.

He thought he might have felt wetness at the back of his neck, a broad but thinning chest rattling against him, and quiet sobs in his ear.

Steve didn't think he - *they* - would survive long enough for a rescue.

*If one was even coming.*

\*\*

## **Notes for the Chapter:**

\*Updated A LOT of the first chapter, fixed some mistakes and made some things more descriptive,



etc, so be sure to check it out! Thank you so much for all the support everyone! I'm so glad you enjoy it!

\*

(See the end of the work for more notes.)